

10 July 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Training (Special)

SUBJECT: Comments on Attached Proposal

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1. [REDACTED] proposal to utilize questionnaire techniques in obtaining students' reactions to courses they have taken is, in my opinion, basically sound. Development of such techniques will (a) obtain better sampling of the student's real opinion than is ordinarily obtained from free essay-type responses; (b) insure more adequate coverage of the topics instructors or chief instructors are interested in; (c) will make possible more systematic and detailed analysis; and (d) bring out more clearly which elements of the course are more in need of revision.

2. By concurrence with the general idea of the use of objective techniques it is not meant to imply that for certain types of problems essay questions will not be appropriate. Certainly in the construction of any questionnaire, provision should be made for free responses. [REDACTED] has made provision for this. 25X1A9a

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3. [REDACTED] sample questionnaire represents a promising start. The questions, I believe, could be made even more specific and a wider coverage given to problems involved. Should student evaluation of the course move in the direction of providing questionnaire material, the following procedure would be appropriate:

a. Analysis of evaluation essays already received to develop ways of phrasing specific questions.

b. Structuring essay-type responses by questions such as that given in Tab A for the purpose of obtaining information to help devise further questions.

c. Once the questions are constructed, there should be constant checking, continuous analysis of results to improve the wording of the questions to the end that they may be specifically meaningful and directly imply actions that need to be taken to improve the instruction.

4. The timing of student evaluation should be carefully considered. Obtaining general-type evaluations at the end of the course gives information which is of value in considering the broad organization of the course, e.g., whether one problem is better than another or whether lectures are suitable for a particular subject taught. Where information that might lead to highly specific improvement is sought, comments or questionnaire reactions should be obtained directly following the situation involved. This principle is particularly appropriate to obtaining information which might help instructors improve themselves. While it is possible at the end of a course to arrange

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NO CHANGE in Class. [REDACTED]

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instructors in order of their skills as lecturers, it is not easy to recall at that time the specific things they did or did not do which might be more helpful to them than the overall type of evaluation. Both types of information are useful; the one to the instructor's supervisor, the other to the instructor himself.

5. The question of whether questionnaires or essays should be anonymous is debatable. My personal preference is for asking for signatures, but explaining very clearly exactly what use is going to be made of the results. The exception to this general principle would be when people who seek comments are in a position to retaliate for unfavorable ones. If instructors, therefore, are going to see comments made about them, students clearly should not be asked to sign.

a. A possibility which might really help the instructors would be the devising of a very brief objective-type questionnaire concerning teaching techniques used by the instructor, administering this questionnaire directly after a particular lecturer had presented his part of the course. This questionnaire would be unsigned; it would be seen only by the instructor involved; it would not be transmitted to his supervisor. The purpose of the questionnaire would be confined to getting information from the students to the instructors in order to help them improve their own teaching techniques.

6. Miscellaneous Points.

a. Concur with [REDACTED] paragraph 5. Instructors should not only look over a questionnaire to be used, but should actively participate in its construction.

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b. Do not concur with the suggestion in paragraph 6 that a research assistant be assigned to TDS to make statistical compilations. A & E Staff has the mechanical facilities to expedite such analyses and the set-up to provide that kind of service to the divisions and staffs of the Office of Training. Development of further research staffs would be, in my opinion, undesirable duplication and subject to criticism from the organization point of view.

c. Do not concur with the proposals in paragraph 7. Believe that a systematic evaluation of properly constructed questionnaires with the answers obtained under proper conditions will furnish all the information that could possibly be obtained by any interviews between students and their training officers. In fact, it is possible that the adoption of the proposed procedure might cause some confusion in responsibilities. So far as recommendation in paragraph 7b is concerned, I do not feel the lecturer's over-all opinion of his audience would serve much purpose, and if asked for in writing might even be irritating to him.

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